

Application No. 10/697,765

Reply to Office Action Dated June 16, 2006

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested in light of the above amendments to the application and the following remarks.

Regarding the Drawings

The drawings are objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a) for failing to show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Concerning the objection of the Examiner under 37 CFR 1.83 (a), please note that, in the phrase "*an element moving from the same side of said sheet stretching board*" of Claim 3, the word "*moving*" stands for "*acting*", as quoted in the patent specification at page 8, line 15. Applicant has amended Claim 3 by replacing "*element moving*" with "*element acting*." Therefore, Applicant submits that corrected drawings are not required.

Regarding the Claims

Claims 3, 4 and 6 have been amended. Currently pending in the application, therefore, are Claims 1-11, of which Claims 1 and 6 are independent. No new matter has been added.

Claim 3 has been amended as noted above to address the Examiner's objection to the drawings under 37 CFR 1.83(a).

Claims 4 and 6 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to clarify the language of the claim, as requested.

Claims 1-11 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 5,730,695 to Hauschild et al. (Hauschild '695).

Application No. 10/697,765

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Prior Art

Hauschild '695 discloses an apparatus for stacking zigzag interfolded articles in a stack 2 comprising two roller sets 4 and 5 suitable for supplying towels 3 as individual sheets or as a continuous web. In particular, the apparatus comprises two folding rollers 6 and 7 that cooperate with stripping fingers 13 and 14 in order to form a stack 2' on fingers 22' and 23' of carrier forks 22 and 23. This feature is generally known in the art as specified in the description (see column 3 lines 13-21 of Hauschild '695). During the growth of the stack 2, fingers move downward in order to avoid its compression. Further, separating and carrying forks 11 and 12 are provided pushing laterally into the stack 2 from opposite sides, once it reaches a required height, in order to form a separating element between the finished stack 2 and a new stack 2'. The forks 11 and 12 push into the stack 2 between two successively deposited towels 3 with an end portion 3' of the lowest towel 3 hanging.

An air jet, emitted by air blowing nozzles 23" provided on the bottom of fingers 23, folds the end portion 3' of the sheet 3 against the back surface of finger 22', before releasing the stack 2 on the conveyor 26. Only one kind of fold of the end portion 3' is possible under the stack: in fact separating and carrying forks 11 and 12 do not assist the air jet during the folding step of end portion 3'. In fact, the separating and carrying forks 11 and 12 do not assist the air jet during the folding step of end portion 3'. In fact, they are always occupied in bearing the stack.

Present Invention

In the present application, the apparatus for separating the stack of sheets provides means for providing an interfolded stack of sheets, a table 16 for supporting the stack movable for

Application No. 10/697,765

Reply to Office Action Dated June 16, 2006

allowing progressively the growth of said stack and for then moving away the formed stack. Two separators 10 and 20 moveable laterally and from opposite sides into the stack 30 suitable for separating the stack located underneath and to leave at least one wing of sheet hanging free between said two separators.

According to the present invention, a sheet stretching board 15 is provided having two functions. In particular, the sheet stretching board 15 provisionally supports the stack 30 when the two separators 10 and 20 are withdrawn and also stretches the freely hanging wing 31' of sheet 30'. In particular, the stretching board 15 stretches completely wing 31' with a portion of wing 32' that exceeds the stretching board 15. In particular, the stretching board is able to move along all the length of the stack independently from the separators 10 and 20. When the stretching board 15 is withdrawn, the portion of wing 32' remains between the stack 30 and the table 16 and can be folded once, by the stretching board in cooperation with the separator 20 (Fig. 8), or twice with the addition of air jet 46 (Figs. 9 and 10).

One important difference between Hauschild '695 and the present invention is, therefore, the presence of the stretching board 15 which is not disclosed, suggested or taught by Hauschild '695.

A novel aspect of the present invention is that the stretching board 15 permits the production of a single or a double fold in the end portion of the sheet. This is not possible with the apparatus of Hauschild '695 in which no supplementary folding devices acting underneath fingers 22' and 23' are disclosed. Thus, the end portion of the sheet can be simply folded by the air jet caused by nozzles 23'' on the back surface of the finger 22'.

Application No. 10/697,765
Reply to Office Action Dated June 16, 2006

One advantage of the arrangement according to the invention is to provide the sheet stretching board 15 which operates as a support additionally to the first and second separators 10 and 20, in order to aid the separator 10 and 20 and to let the user choose among a single or a double fold of the freely hanging wing.

Therefore, Applicant believes that original Claim 1 is not anticipated by Hauschild '695.

Independent Claim 1 and independent Claim 6 as amended are believed to now be in condition for allowance, and dependent Claims 2-5 and 7-11 are thereby also in condition for allowance. Therefore, Applicant submits that the amended claims overcome the Examiner's rejections and objections and are in condition for allowance, and Applicant respectfully requests the same

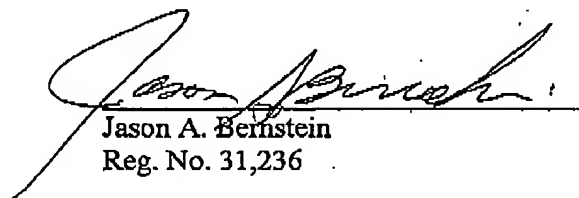
Some amendments and remarks contained in this document, or in other documents filed or to be filed with the US Patent Office in this case or related cases, may in the future be deemed, by a court of law or government agency of competent jurisdiction, to be narrowing amendments and/or related to patentability. Accordingly, the public is hereby advised that the applicant: (a) intends to relinquish only that claim coverage which is clearly, explicitly, precisely and unequivocally stated to be relinquished; (b) does not intend to relinquish any other claim coverage; (c) reserves the right to assert that any such amendments and/or remarks are not narrowing and/or are not related to patentability; and (d) intends to fully assert the full range of equivalents, under the Doctrine of Equivalents and otherwise, which are presently known or which may become known in the future, for each and every element of each and every claim, and for each and every claim.

Application No. 10/697,765
Reply to Office Action Dated June 16, 2006

Should the Examiner have questions or suggestions which will put this application in line for allowance, please contact the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

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